

2018.06.26

Deputy J.M. Maçon of the Minister for Infrastructure regarding an update to the Sustainable Transport Policy: [OQ.68/2018]

Given that the Sustainable Transport Policy, which was adopted in 2010, and that many of the timescales set out in the proposition have passed, will the Minister explain what work, if any, is being done to update the policy ahead of the new Island Plan being developed and how the recommendations from the November 2010 Scrutiny review of the policy will be incorporated in any such update?

Deputy K.C. Lewis of St. Saviour (The Minister for Infrastructure):

While the Sustainable Transport Policy's target dates passed in 2015, its strategic message is as relevant today as it was in 2010. We need to get more Islanders using sustainable travel for everyday journeys. Walking and cycling result in a healthier population, reducing the pressure on our Health Department. Where that is not possible, catching the bus or sharing a ride with a friend results in less traffic and pollution on our streets. Although the timescales have elapsed, we are busy delivering the infrastructure designed to support the S.T.P. (Sustainable Transport Policy) and building on the original targets with some notable successes. Peak traffic is down 5 per cent despite a 9 per cent rise in population; bus ridership is up 40 per cent; cycling has been growing 20 per cent per year; and the car annual average mileage is down by 200 miles. This shows Islanders are willing to embrace sustainable transport and there is a great opportunity. Unfortunately the rate of change has not matched the original aspirations due to a lack of disincentives to single-occupancy journeys for commuters. Once the States have agreed its strategic objectives, I will direct what changes are required for the S.T.P. to meet these goals. With regard to the Scrutiny report, the majority of recommendations have been acted upon.

10.1.1 Deputy J.M. Maçon:

I was not sure if the Minister was then bringing a new updated policy to the Assembly. Can I ask whether, within this review and update of the document, the amendment of the Constable of St. Mary will be retained in saying that effectively sticks will not be used until all the carrots have been exhausted?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

Absolutely. I believe in carrots, not sticks, so I am with the Deputy on that one. I do not see why we cannot have an updated policy, but it is an ongoing matter and we will see what comes forward. But I am with the Deputy, the more that we can do to encourage people on sustainable transport the better.

10.1.2 Connétable A.S. Crowcroft of St. Helier:

I do not know if the new Minister is aware, but his predecessor gave a commitment to this Assembly to bring a walking and cycling strategy to the Assembly before he left office. Could the Minister tell us what has happened to that; was it done? If it was not done, is it nearly done, and will he be bringing it to the Assembly?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

Again, this is ongoing. My successor, now my predecessor, continued on the good work started by then Deputy Le Fondré, now Senator Le Fondré, Chief Minister, in the St. Peter's Track, which has been a great success, and that was continued by my predecessor. Obviously, we are working with the Deputy of Grouville, who wishes to progress the cycling track from the east, so that is something

I am very keen on progressing, and as many walking as we can in to town the better. As I mentioned previously, the more people we can get out of their cars and walking the better.

10.1.3 The Connétable of St. Helier:

The Minister has not answered my question. A commitment was made to this Assembly that a piece of work - a long overdue walking and cycling strategy, not pavements and cycle routes here and there around the Island, but a strategy - would be brought to the Assembly. Will the Minister be bringing that strategy as promised by the previous Minister?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

I will be happy to review that strategy and bring it back to the Assembly. I am not familiar with it, I must admit - that was a while ago - but more than happy to look at it again. As I say, the more people walking and cycling the better.

10.1.4 Deputy M. Tadier:

The Minister in his initial response said that sharing a bus creates less traffic and less pollution, but does he agree that if you have oversized buses in the Island, which are churning out diesel fumes, that it is much better if people are using small electric vehicles, which do not cause jams because they fit on the road and they are not emitting any fumes because they are running on batteries rather than diesel?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

An interesting question. I believe most of our buses now running are Enviro-6 standard, which is far less polluting than anything we have had previously. There is a move towards electrification, the Deputy is quite correct there. Obviously, we will be encouraging L.P.G. (liquid petroleum gas) and other fuels, biofuels, for cars. But electrification is coming and the U.K. has committed to that and no doubt we will follow suit. But the buses are very environmentally friendly, they are Enviro-6 standard, so they are the best we can get with regard to pollution at the moment. But car sharing is something we would encourage to cut down the amount of cars on the road.

10.1.5 Deputy M. Tadier:

Would the Minister answer the second part of the question and does he think that maybe Jersey should consider getting buses that fit on the roads?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

They do fit on the roads. They are wider than we would like but they are the narrowest we can get without having them specially made and they are prohibitively expensive, the very, very narrow buses. Of course then we have a capacity problem because we cannot get as many people on. So unfortunately life is a compromise but when the current bus company took over they did scour around for the best possible buses and these were the best buses they could get. Drivers were not happy initially because it is a different lock on the buses and they have to steer wider to get around corners, but we have other considerations to take into account, for instance wheelchair users and people with mobility problems that the smaller buses may not contend with.

10.1.6 The Connétable of St. Brelade:

The Sustainable Transport Policy of 2010 had a target of 15 per cent to reduce the peak hour traffic levels to and from St. Helier by 2015. Would the Minister be aware of whether we have achieved that figure and, if not, does he hope to achieve it or does he have a projected figure?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

I do not believe we have achieved that figure so far. I will check with the department but, as I say, we have had an increase in population that the Constable is well aware of, so we are striving to achieve those targets.

10.1.7 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Will the Minister circulate the numbers he gave earlier on and will he recall for Members that in the Sustainable Transport Plan there was such a thing as a hoppa bus - cheap or free - to circulate around town and will that be revived in the next Medium Term Financial Plan from which it was struck down and the money was not voted for it?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

Yes, indeed. The Deputy has just answered his own question that in fact I was promoting the hoppa bus system, especially around St. Helier, but it was not budgeted for by Treasury so sadly that did not come to fruition.

[11:30]

There were several schemes going at the time, whether it should be sponsored by maybe one of the local stores or even by the States, but a hoppa bus would be beneficial for people who live in the town area but it is too far to walk and maybe have mobility problems. So I would be in favour of a hoppa bus system, if that can be achieved.

10.1.8 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Will he promote a viable option?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

I would promote as best as I can, but that is not solely my decision. If the money is there we can do anything.

10.1.9 Deputy R. Ward:

May I ask the Minister: does he agree that there is an urgent need for improvement in quality of roads if we are to encourage cyclists and indeed motorcyclists and remove cars from the road, particularly in St. Helier where there is a desperate need to reduce the number of cars entering town every day?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

Indeed, I believe the Deputy is asking me a similar question later on; I am also up for questions without notice, if we are straying off the buses slightly and the Sustainable Transport Policy. Yes, there is more need to repair roads. Members may be aware that there is an app you can load on to your iPhones or iPads called "Love Jersey". If you take a picture of the various potholes or defects in the road - and as long as you have your location setting switched on - that will go straight through to a central control base and that will go to either the Parish or the relevant States department. With the G.P.S. (global positioning system) they know exactly within a foot where the problem is and some of these are corrected within 24 hours. So that is the easiest and best way to report any problems whatsoever. The ring road itself is inspected every 3 weeks for any defects and that is put straight through to the department.

10.1.10 Deputy K.F. Morel:

I would like to link Deputy Ward's questions. We have seen the growth in size of vehicles on our roads and this is having a detrimental effect on our roads, whether it is heavy goods vehicles, buses,

domestic S.U.V.s (sport utility vehicles), this enormous growth is harming Jersey's transport and the way we get about the Island. Will the Minister ensure that the size of vehicles on our roads forms part of the Sustainable Transport Policy?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

The size of the vehicles on the roads is already controlled by the Construction and Use Regulations. Also any vehicle that is excessive to that width or height has to have a P.30 exemption permit, so those regs are already in place. I think possibly it is the volume of traffic that is coming through now and not necessarily the size of the traffic. I would encourage people to buy smaller eco-friendly cars than the big huge 4x4s but that is a matter of choice at the moment.

10.1.11 Deputy J.M. Maçon:

The Sustainable Transport Policy had modest targets, which we have learned 8 years on have not been met. I raise the issue of Scrutiny because the Scrutiny Panel made the observation that it was £1 million underfunded and therefore was never going to reach its targets. I would have liked the Minister to have said Scrutiny were right in their observations. So therefore I have to ask the Minister how hard is he going to battle when it comes to the round of negotiating in the M.T.F.P. (Medium Term Financial Plan) for this policy, given that even under the existing policy, which has not been removed, the targets have not even been met?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

Absolutely, we have an increase in the budget for later this year and early next for road repairs, resurfacing, *et cetera*, so we are already on track with that. There is always more we can do if the money is available but I think we are very much on track. We have a good budget for later this year and early next to get the roads up to a reasonable standard. There has been a lack of investment in the past but that is something we are trying to correct.